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**FOLLOW
THE FAMILY
FOOD
AND
FITNESS
FORMULA**



Texas Agricultural Extension Service • The Texas A&M University System

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FOLLOW THE FAMILY FOOD AND FITNESS FORMULA:

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Texans of all ages are actively pursuing the ideals of fitness and good health. Why? Because fitness has its own built-in rewards. A balanced, ongoing fitness program can help you feel better, look better and enjoy life more than ever. Once you and your family make a commitment to a fitness program, you may discover you have developed new habits — good, healthy habits to continue for the rest of your life.

Eating Fit — Acting Fit

A total fitness program combines acting fit and eating fit. Either of these factors alone is not enough. For example, some people diet but never exercise. Others exercise vigorously, but ignore good eating habits. And some *try* to diet and exercise but can not seem to keep it up for very long. What follows is an easy, practical guide for families who want to eat fit and act fit.

Planning Is the Key

Random eating can lead to overeating. And meal-skipping can be hazardous to your diet and health. A regular eating pattern will help you control your eating and make you less likely to end up eating in binges. The same holds true for your exercise program. Plan a set time on designated days for exercise and think of these times as appointments with yourself that cannot be broken. Never push all your activity into the weekends. Your body will be unprepared for the sudden strain, and muscle or skeletal injuries may result. The pattern you choose is up to you, but make it fit into your lifestyle so it will be easier to follow.

*Respectively, Extension foods and nutrition specialists and health education specialist, The Texas A&M University System.

Eating Fit — Food Facts

Eat a Balanced Diet

Select foods from the basic food groups each day so you can get the protein, carbohydrate, fats, vitamins and minerals you need. Choose a wide assortment of foods from these groups: vegetables and fruits; breads and cereals; milk and cheese; meat, poultry, fish and beans.

Eat sparingly from the fifth food group which includes fats, sweets and alcohol. The foods in this group provide relatively low levels of vitamins, minerals and protein compared to the calories they add to your diet.

Eat Less and Enjoy It More

Follow these suggestions to increase your satisfaction while decreasing your calorie intake at every meal:

- Use a small plate so the portions will seem larger.
- Serve small portions at the stove, rather than serving family-style at the table. This will decrease the temptation to have seconds.
- Set your fork down between bites to slow down your eating.
- Chew each mouthful thoroughly and swallow before taking another bite.
- Sip low-fat milk, water or fruit juice after every third or fourth mouthful of food.
- Feel free to leave some food on your plate.
- Wait 15 to 30 minutes before having dessert. You may discover that you do not really want any.

Eat Out and Eat Fit

Do not say “no” to a restaurant meal just because you are on a diet. Eating out is a way of life in America, so plan for meals away from home. By selecting food wisely, each family member can meet his or her nutritional and calorie needs. Here are some suggestions for eating fit in restaurants:

- Select a restaurant that offers low-calorie foods rather than a limited menu.
- Select lean (fat-trimmed) meat, chicken or fish over fried meats, and avoid sauces and gravies.
- Ask the server how the food is prepared. Try to avoid fried foods. If you would like something broiled, go ahead and ask.
- Choose vegetables prepared without cheese, cream sauce or large amounts of fat.
- Choose salad over the soup and request low-calorie dressing or lemon on the side.

- Select low-calorie desserts such as fresh fruit, sherbet or fruit gelatin, without whipped topping.
- Shun the salt shaker until after you have tasted the food.
- Drink skim milk or buttermilk, diet soft drinks, coffee or tea.
- Do not feel like you have to clean your plate when portions are too large.
- At fast food restaurants, let the kids eat hamburgers while you head for the salad bar.

Practice Willpower

Here are some tricks for developing the willpower you did not know you had:

- To cope with hunger pangs, drink fruit juice or hot bouillon.
- When you feel the urge to eat, delay it by going for a walk, calling a friend, or rewarding yourself in some other way.
- Do not eat while engaging in other activities such as watching television, reading, or talking on the telephone.
- Decide before each meal what you are going to eat. Then stop when it has been eaten.
- When you are in the mood for celebrating, reward yourself with a gift other than food.

Acting Fit — Fitness Facts

It is not easy to stay fit in today's convenience-oriented society. We have cars to take us from place to place, desk jobs that keep us sitting for hours during the day, and television that keeps us sitting for more hours in the evening. Research shows that thin people are more physically active than overweight people. So start acting like a fit person now. Find little ways of adding activity to your daily routine:

- Use the stairs instead of the elevator.
- When possible, walk or bicycle instead of driving.
- Park at the far end of the parking lot.
- Do not use drive-up windows. Walk in instead.
- While talking on the phone, stand rather than sit.
- Take a short walk at lunchtime.
- Make your household chores work for you. Mop the floor; push the vacuum cleaner or lawn mower more vigorously.
- Do bent-knee sit-ups while you watch TV. Run in place during the commercials.
- Do *anything* except sit still. Every extra move burns calories.

Acting fit also requires planned activities for flexibility, muscular strength, muscular endurance and cardiovascular endurance.

Maintain Flexibility

Stretch before and after you exercise to avoid pulled muscles. Do stretching exercises slowly and smoothly. When the first sign of muscle tension, pull or tightening occurs, hold your position for several seconds, then gently relax further into the stretch until each muscle is stretched as far as comfortable. *Never bounce!* Try these flexibility exercises:

- **Chair Twist** — Sitting in a chair, cross your left leg over your right leg, put your right elbow on the outside of left knee, twist and look over your left shoulder as far as you comfortably can. Hold 1 minute, then reverse direction.
- **Starting Blocks** — Kneel on right knee. Place left foot flat on floor with knee bent at right angle. Place hands on floor on either side of left foot. Try to straighten both legs as far as you comfortably can. Hold for up to 1 minute. Reverse legs.
- **Bent Leg** — Sitting in a chair, with both hands pull one knee as close to your chest as you comfortably can. Hold for 1 minute, switch legs. Do both legs together.
- **Shrugs** — Sitting down, raise your shoulders slowly up toward your ears, relax and let them drop slowly. Repeat for 60 seconds.



Develop Muscular Strength

Weights are often used to develop muscular strength, but you can improvise using books or canned goods from your kitchen. Start with a few repetitions and increase the number of repetitions as the exercise becomes easier. Try these muscular strength exercises at home or at the office. Always breathe during these exercises. Never hold your breath.

- **Overhead Press** — Sitting in a chair, hold a book, can or other appropriate weight in each hand. Start with elbows and hands at shoulder level, extend your arms fully over head. Repeat ten times.



- **Curls*** — Sitting in a chair, grasp the underside of your desk with palms up. Pull up, as though trying to lift the desk off the floor. Exert maximum pressure for 10 seconds, repeat ten times. Do not hold your breath.

- **Leg Pulls*** — Sitting in a chair, hook your foot under a stationary object just above floor level, (like a desk drawer). Exert pressure upward with foot and knee for 10 seconds, repeat ten times switching legs. Do not hold your breath.



- **Chest-Arm Squeeze** — Sitting in a chair, grasp the outside edges of your desk (or if desk is too wide, use your top drawer) and squeeze, exerting maximum pressure towards midline of body for 10 seconds. Repeat ten times. Do not hold your breath.

Increase Muscular Endurance

Muscular endurance exercises involve working against moderate resistance for a prolonged time. Start slowly and gradually work up to 1 to 3 minutes per exercise. Try some of these:

- **Wall Sits** — Stand with your back to a wall, heels 12 to 18 inches from wall. Slide your buttocks down the wall until your thighs are parallel to the floor. Hold. Repeat for up to 3 minutes.



- **Seated Dip** — Sitting in a chair, place hands palms down on the arms of the chair, raise your torso up, lifting feet off floor, and hold. Repeat up to 3 minutes.



- **Crunches** — Lying flat on your back with hands behind head, move your knees towards your chest. Curl upper body toward knees. Try to touch elbows to knees. Repeat up to 25 times.

*These are isometric exercises and should not be done by anyone with a heart or vascular problem.

Aerobic Exercise Conditions the Whole Body

While a wide range of physical activities from gardening to washing the car are beneficial, certain exercises are better for the health of your heart and lungs. These are called aerobic or cardiovascular exercises. Aerobic exercises involve sustained, rhythmic movement of the large muscles (arms and legs) such as brisk walking, jogging, bicycling, swimming, jumping rope and other active sports and games. Aerobic exercises are great calorie burners, but remember that you must use 3,500 calories to lose a pound! That is where "eating fit" becomes so important to your total fitness plan.

Other important exercise and fitness facts are:

- Aerobic exercise not only burns calories, it also increases your metabolic rate for several hours afterward.
- For weight control, the length of time you exercise is more important than how strenuously you exercise.
- Aerobic exercise decreases body fat while increasing muscle mass and toning muscle tissue.
- Exercise helps relieve stress while increasing relaxation and improving sleep.
- For maximum benefit, exercise 20 to 30 minutes, 3 to 4 days a week.



Fitness Should Be Family Fun

A family that plays together, stays together — physically fit. Here are some ideas for family fitness activities:

- Take a brisk walk each evening.
- Ride bicycles or swim at a local pool.
- Play catch, shoot baskets, toss a frisbee.
- Play family sports like softball, badminton or volleyball.

Whatever type of activity you and your family select, it will have rewards. Family members will look and feel better. They will improve cardiovascular fitness and feel better about themselves. Enjoy the closeness that comes with shared family activities.

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